Spencer Compton Cavendish, eighth Duke of Devonshire, once had a dream. "I dreamed," he said "that I was making a speech in the House of Lords. I woke up and found I really was."

THE DUKES OF ENGLAND

ENGLAND has twenty-six dukes. It does not seem likely that their number will be further increased. Although the King possesses the right to do so, the scruples of the Crown have during the last seventy years outweighed even the most powerful protection. Since titles of less exalted nobility—lord, viscount—are frequently conferred, this restraint cannot be explained by a prejudice against rejuvenating the aristocracy. And indeed, there is more in it: the desire not to tamper with this feudal institution, to conserve it with utmost caution, to divert attention away from it as far as possible. For the British Crown knows full well that the dukes of England represent not the strongest, as they should, but the hollowest branch of the monarchy. For that reason they have been granted a sort of political sanctuary to prevent any strain being placed on the institution as such. People have become accustomed to them as they have to the wigs of the judges and the medieval costume of the Lord Mayor of London. But just as some other profession could not be expected to begin wearing a similar antiquated costume now, in the same way the people cannot be expected to put up with a new duke.

The gallery of these twenty-six men is a weird one. Their dignity is a fiction. It is backed neither by power nor a will to survive. Compared to the dukes of the island, even the maharajas seem a modern, rational institution: at least they impress the natives. As to the dukes' private lives, more often than not they give rise to offense rather than that type of interest commonly shown for the doings of a film star. For a film star has to work, she has to be qualified, i.e., talented or very beautiful, to be able to finance her whims. Dukes need neither talent nor beauty. By the mere fact of their birth they are among the richest people of their country, and nobody remembers exactly why.

The ducal coronet has eight golden strawberry leaves, and the ceremonial robe consists of a cloak and cap trimmed with ermine. The dukes are addressed as "Your Grace," and many of their ancestors gained fame and influence by robbery on land and sea.

Some years ago, adventurous stage directors attempted to produce Shakespeare's historical plays in modern dress. Those who saw such performances will remember that the scene sometimes touched upon the border line of the weird and the grotesque, because the language and the thoughts of the poet could not be separated from the milieu for which he had intended them. The same dissonance is perceptible in the present existence of the English dukes, who display the pomp, wealth, and brilliant titles of their ancestors, while they themselves are nothing but mediocre golf players, social lions, or harmless outsiders. It would be quite mistaken to regard them as the secret driving force behind the British plutocracy. Of course, they are shareholders of Vickers-Armstrong, possess a considerable number of coal mines, and own huge tracts of land; but they rarely take an interest in the administration of their own fortune. Their agents can do that much more ably.

Lord John Patrick Kinross, whose title has not deterred him from now and again criticizing the British aristocracy, recently published some statistics about the dukes which did not lack an undertone of irony. Each of them, he found, has 1.1 wives, 2.2 children, 3.6 residences, and 45,000 acres of land. (The Buccleuchs own 500,000 acres in Scotland.) Their average age is 63.4 years, and the sum total of their capital £50 million. Half of them are millionaires, four possessing more than £5 million, and only four of them have an annual income of less than £20,000. 49 per cent are intelligent, 51 per cent good-looking. In other words, they are less fertile than sultans, more monogamous than USA industrialists, longer-lived than mandarins, poorer than maharajas, uglier than film stars, and more intelligent than royal princes or horses.

What is not taken into account in these statistics is eccentricity. All pertinent literature—serious historical works as well as the social pages of the English newspapers—reveals that the greatest efforts exerted by this caste are in that field. The decline of a social class is always expressed in its endeavors to achieve the bizarre in life. The process develops according to set lines; even the individual who attempts to resist is drawn in as long as he shares the caste's conditions of existence. Most of the dukes are the prey of some eccentricity or other, whether they prefer to dress like tramps, revel in bottomless superstition, make a display of excessive querulousness, or go in for extravagant pleasures. Their vast fortunes, the treasures assembled in their country seats, and the nimbus of their titles, have, so to speak, made of them asocial figures, having as they do to bear no responsibility whatever

They live beyond the reach of the worries, problems, and duties with which ordinary mortals have to cope. Even their money is theirs by the grace of God.

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Bernard Marmaduke Fitzalan-Howard, a thinskinned, weakly young man with tired, swollen eyes, has been the Duke of Norfolk since the age of nine. He is the sixteenth in the line, and his family is the oldest ducal house in England. He did not go to public school because he failed his entrance examination. When he was fourteen he was declared to be of age, and he was given full power over his inherited fortune of £17 million. His real-estate possessions are harder to evaluate. They consist chiefly of the family castle of Arundel, one of the mightiest castles of the island, and of other residences and country seats in Sheffield, Sussex, Derbyshire, etc. The value of the art treasures hoarded in these manors is not available to public knowledge. Only the family gold plate, which was unpacked for the banquet to celebrate his coming of age, has been assessed. It weighs 1.5 tons and is worth £50,000.

The Duke of Norfolk

The family's title dates from 1483. At that time, John Howard, one of the richest men in the kingdom, was rewarded by Edward IV with the ducal coronet for his services in the war against the rebels of Lancaster. He was simultaneously appointed Earl Marshal, an office that paid him an honorary fee of £20. This sum had the purchasing power of £600 of the present currency. All that can be said about his descendants is that they were always among the richest men of the kingdom, were Earl Marshals, and received an annual stipend of £20. None of them ever asked for an increase or exchange adjustment.

Like almost all other dukes, they married the daughters or sisters of their peers. It is possible that this is the reason for the sickliness of Bernard Marmaduke. His father, the fifteenth Duke of Norfolk, married for the second time when he was fifty-six in order not to die without direct issue; his first wife and his first son had died quickly one after the other. Bernard Marmaduke is the offspring of this late marriage. He is the most colorless personality in the long series of Norfolks. His favorite pastime is to organize horse racing, royal marriages, and ceremonial processions. As Earl Marshal, he played a certain role at the last Coronation; his private expenditure for representation on this occasion amounted to £4,000.

The Duke of Westminster

He is one of those dukes of whom it is said in England that they are staggering under the burden of their past. In order to obliterate the unfavorable impression created by the fact that even after war had begun he, the premier dignitary of the high nobility, could only be lured from his indifference by horse racing, he temporarily took up a public office. He became Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture in the House of Lords, and it is his business to answer incidental questions concerning the supply of fertilizers, consumer prices, or artificial insemination of milch cows. As a rule, these questions are submitted in advance and dealt with by the experts of the department in question; all the Parliamentary Secretary has to do is to read off the required information from a piece of paper.

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Norfolk is not the richest of the dukes. He is surpassed in this respect by the representative of the youngest ducal family: Hugh Arthur Grosvenor, second Duke of Westminster. But even his father, Hugh Grosvenor, upon whom Queen Victoria bestowed the coronet with the strawberry leaves and the ermine cloak in 1874, was richer than any of the dukes of the kingdom. He had no particular military or political services to his credit.

The Westminsters are the descendants of one Tom Grosvenor and a Miss Davies. In 1680 this former Miss Davies inherited a little farm called Ebury. It was a piece of land of moderate size which brought in four shillings a year in rent. But it was this inheritance which provided the chief if not the only condition for the great-great-grandsons of these modest people being raised to the peerage. For some time now, the actual value of the former farm has been some £20 million, and the rent income has risen from four shillings to £20,000 per year. Fate so willed it that the soil of Ebury was to become the London district of Westminster.

It would, of course, be underestimating the fortune of the Duke, who is now sixty-six years old, if one were to regard these £20,000 as his main income. How little these would cover his needs is shown by the fact alone that he pays £10,000 a year to each of his two divorced wives. His free capital is invested in some of the largest real-estate speculations throughout the world, where it was transferred by his ancestors who, although not dukes, were all the better

businessmen. It goes without saying that it is also invested in industry, shipping, and oversea trade. The income of Hugh Arthur in the way of interest, dividends, and revenues is so veiled that no one has even attempted to guess at it.

He is not niggardly. He has the full face of a *bon vivant*, goes to the best tailors, and usually wears a bow tie with white polka dots. It is his ambition to be regarded as a cosmopolitan playboy, a reputation he maintained in peace time by an almost morbid chasing from one international pleasure resort to another. He was always moving about between Eton Hall, Monte Carlo, and the Scottish shooting grounds. If you did not meet him there or in Paris, he was cruising in the Adriatic with his yacht the *Cutty Sark*. As he hates to be alone, he always loaded his yacht with a swarm of guests whom he invited by telegraph, wiring their airplane fare to Venice.

Westminster is a spendthrift on a grand scale. Skillful propaganda sometimes surrounds him with the auriole of the benefactor. Thus, on the occasion of his third marriage, he waived one month's rent from his poorer tenants.

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The Bedfords, one of the oldest families, are difficult. The eleventh duke of this line, who died in 1940, lived alone in Warburn Castle. He bought up famous paintings at the big auctions to let them disappear into the rooms of his manor. He owned one of the most valuable collections, but people only have an approximate idea of what it contains. He made his purchases through agents who were not allowed to reveal the identity of the actual buyer. We are told that a single little room contains eighteen Canalettos. Warburn Castle has a hundred and twenty rooms. The old duke lived in sixty of them; the other sixty were always kept in readiness for guests, but stood empty throughout his lifetime. He also always ate alone, being served by seven footmen.

The Duke of Bedford

In addition to his art gallery, he also maintained a private zoo. His favorites were a number of giraffes with whom he spent several hours every day. In a separate park he raised llamas. These were looked after by guards wearing green uniforms and hats with cockades. In another enclosure he kept wild animals. In order to be able to move about among them, he had rails laid in all directions on the terrain, on which he had himself driven around in an armored train. What he enjoyed more than anything else was to try out new methods from his safe cover to make the animals furious.

The Bedford fortune amounts to £4,650,000. According to the old duke's own words, they owe it to the "fortunate possession of a few residences in Bloomsbury," the center of London's intellectual and academic life. Even when he died five years ago, the duke did not have to leave his private sphere: he had thought of everything and possessed two crematories of his own.

But in spite of all this, the Royal House and his peers liked the somewhat querulous old eccentric better than his son Hastings William Sackville Russell, twelfth Duke of Bedford and Marquis of Tavistock, Earl of Bedford, Baron Russell of Thornbaugh and Baron Howland of Streatham, to give him his full name. Having served until 1913 as an officer of the Middlesex Regiment, Hastings then resigned his commission and began to annoy his environment with an importunate pacifism. That has remained more or less his main activity. He exasperates the Government, the Upper House, and the Lower House, nor does he miss any chance to provoke everybody else against himself. With a watchful look he studies every one he comes into contact with, and as soon as he has discovered a weakness in his partner he does not shrink from any wanton insult.

In this war, too, he has been encouraging the antiwar party, proposing one compromise peace after another—much to the annoyance of the British cabinet—and refusing to pay any subsidies to the Church because it was making propaganda for militarism. His intrigues have attracted such unfavorable attention in London that the Lord Chancellor had recently to declare in the House of Lords: "Bedford's opinions are pestilential." Herbert Morrison, the Home Secretary, whom he is particularly fond of provoking, warned him in public of "Regulation 18b," by power of which the Government arrested Sir Oswald Mosley. This outsider policy of the duke originates less from any fanatical conviction than from the whole family's recurrent inclination to display an eccentric originality. His mother insisted at the age of sixty-seven on learning to fly and getting her pilot's license. She actually got it and soon after crashed with her private plane. She was killed instantly. At her funeral the duke, then only Marquis of Tavistock, appeared in a lounge suit and a green cloth cap.

What he has in common with his father is a certain liking for animals; he is chiefly interested in parrots. On his estates no game may be shot; fox hunting, so popular among England's landed gentry and aristocracy, is prohibited on his land.

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Excess, eccentricity, bored incapability, that

is generally the atmosphere of the ducal manors. Almost all the dukes went to Eton. But whether they finished the curriculum or not, they became, with few exceptions, no more than their fathers' eccentric spendthrifts or smart nonentities.

Among the exceptions are the Duke of Abercorn, who has been serving his country as Governor of Northern Ireland since 1922; the Duke of Buccleuch, who has frequently shown understanding and lack of prejudice in foreign-political discussions in the Upper House, particularly those concerning Germany (a fact which led to his detention in his own home for some time in 1940, in spite of his being related by marriage with the Royal House); and the Duke of Devonshire who, before acceding to his title, carried on for many years the Parliamentary traditions of his old Whig family in the House of Commons and who has since filled several minor ministerial posts.

The Duke of Portland

The seventh Duke of Portland, who has borne the title only since 1943, is still a more or less unknown factor. His grandfather's hobby had been to play "catacombs," for which purpose he had ballrooms, skating rinks, and a riding school built underground. His father's main ambition was to shoot a thousand stags, one which he succeeded in fulfilling. The present Duke has been ascribed statesman-like aspirations, since he proposed in the House of Lords that a tax be placed on lipsticks. This, he explained, would, in contrast to land taxes, be one of the few forms of taxation reconcilable with Great Britain's principles of freedom, as it would leave it up to the judgment of those affected whether to pay it or not.

The mother of the present Duke of Portland is a devotee of the sport of all duchesses, prevention of cruelty to animals. It is a well-known fact that in circles which are, so to speak, beyond the reach of social questions, there is a sentimental concern for homeless cats and mangy dogs. Immediately after the Allied landing in North Africa, the Duchess of Portland founded a "Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in North Africa," because "she had learned that the mules were usually overloaded." She presides over this society with great energy. The Duchess of Hamilton, who held a corner of the canopy over the Queen at the last coronation, is also a member; she is a passionate supporter of the Anti-Vivisection League; she is a vegetarian, tames foxes, and has artificial furs made for her at enormous cost. Other duchesses go from abattoir to abattoir to see that the animals are not maltreated. Many of them eat no meat but only trout and halibut.

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It might be said that, although the dukes are of no particular use to the people, they do not cause any particular harm, because they are passive and without political ambition, thus showing a restraint rarely to be found in reactionary castes. Going one step further, the opinion can even be heard that it is not a bad thing if a country can afford the luxury of an exclusive upper class whose luster serves to raise the international repute of the whole country and which, moreover, represents a standard for the happiness attainable on earth.

This flattering interpretation is like too thick make-up under which the wrinkled face appears all the more clearly. Just as the dukes can only play their human roles because others see to it that none of their egocentric whims remains unsatisfied, so does their patriarchal economic system continue to exist solely because more capable and clever people profit from it. The social history of England in the twentieth century proves that all attempts at reform foundered in the last resort on the immutableness of landed property.

There has been no lack of attacks. When Lloyd George was Prime Minister, he believed that the Great War was the right moment. It is characteristic that the dukes only made a pretense of defending themselves; they did not really have to defend themselves. The Prime Minister was beating with bare fists against a wall. A little mortar crumbled, but otherwise everything remained as it was. He demanded increased taxation of the ducal revenues. He won: in 1918 the dukes had to pay ten shillings on every pound of income to the state treasury. But what did this mean to them, measured by their capital? Later governments tightened the screw of taxation even more, and today nine tenths of their income goes in taxation. At best a further increase of capital is prevented in this way, but even that is not certain.

The mammoth estates still remain, as they have for many centuries, untampered in the hands of a few. This is the stumbling block to all settlement projects; this is the reason why nothing can be done about the misery of the slums. And because the dukes always offer a precedent in the treatment of large fortunes—and thus of all high finance—they are automatically the protectors of the unscrupulous speculation which has its center in London, and at the same time the patrons of the most outdated social constitution known to any modern industrial state. That is the function the dukes fill within the Empire. As long as this function is left to them, all projects for a reform of labor legislation, of agricultural policies, and of housing are doomed to remain empty talk like the Beveridge plan.